

Social Security Administration

CHAPTER 4

To be eligible to receive FSA funds, each student must provide a correct Social Security Number (SSN). To confirm the student's SSN for schools, the Department conducts a match with the Social Security Administration. In this chapter, we discuss the SSN requirement and the match process.

The FAFSA collects the student's Social Security Number (SSN) so that the Department can verify it through a match with the Social Security Administration. The Social Security Administration and the FAFSA processing system work together to conduct the match verifying that the student's SSN is valid and that the name and birth date associated with that SSN match the name and birth date provided by the student.

The Central Processing System won't process an application without an SSN. A student who doesn't have an SSN, or doesn't remember his or her SSN must contact the local Social Security office for help. For additional information (in English and Spanish), a student should call the Social Security Administration at 1-800-772-1213 or go to its web site (www.ssa.gov). There is one exception to the requirement to provide SSNs, as discussed below (see "Exception for Micronesia, Marshall Islands, Palau").

The SSN is one of the key identifiers for the student's records at the Department and other agencies. Therefore, you must make sure the Department knows the correct SSN if you have documentation that the SSN on the application or output document is wrong. You can fulfill this requirement by having the student correct the number preferably on a new FAFSA.

SSN MATCH

The CPS prints the SSN match result in the "FAA Information" section of the output document as the SSN Match Flag. In addition, the CPS prints a comment giving the student instructions if there was a problem with the match. There is no comment if the match is successful.

If the match is successful, the CPS doesn't rematch the student's data against the Social Security database on subsequent transactions. However, the CPS will attempt the match again if the student makes corrections to the name, birth date, or SSN. (Note that the SSN can't be corrected if all the match elements were previously confirmed; see "Successful Match" below)

SSN requirement

Higher Education Act
Sec. 484(p),
Student Assistance General Provisions
34 CFR 668.32(i), 668.36

SSN doesn't match

Student reported wrong SSN
→ correct FAFSA data
FAFSA processing error
→ call 1-800-4-FED-AID
Error in SSA database
→ Contact SSA office; resubmit SSN as correction after SSA change is made

Other match problems

→ SSN matches, but name and date of birth don't match
→ Missing FAFSA information: student didn't report a name or birth date, or didn't sign the FAFSA
→ SSN record includes date of death

Successful match

If the CPS match with the Social Security Administration confirms the student's SSN, and the Social Security records have the same name and birth date as reported on the FAFSA, you may disburse aid to the student. No comment is provided on the output document when the SSN match is successful. Of course, if you have any conflicting information about the SSN, you must resolve the conflict before disbursing FSA funds to the student.

Once a student's SSN is confirmed, and there is no discrepancy on the name or birth date, the student cannot change the SSN. If a student whose match data have been confirmed subsequently tries to change his SSN, the CPS will not accept the change. Instead, the student's SAR will have a comment telling the student to contact the financial aid administrator for help. In the unlikely event that the confirmed SSN is wrong, the student must correct it by filing a new FAFSA.

No match on the Social Security Number

You must resolve any problems with the match before disbursing aid. If the SSN is not found in the Social Security Administration database, the student's application will be rejected. The student will also receive a comment that instructs her to correct her SSN or contact the SSA if she believes the number reported is correct. The student will have to correct the application information with the CPS and get a successful match result before she can receive aid.

COD and SSN changes

See the electronic announcements on the ifap website at www.ifap.ed.gov for information about the COD project. See the April 18, 2002 announcement for SSN corrections in CPS.

▼ *Student reported wrong SSN on the FAFSA.* If the student's application is rejected because she reported an SSN that is not in the Social Security Administration's database, the student must provide the correct SSN to the CPS. This will change the current SSN in the CPS, but it will not change the original, identifying SSN. Previously the Department recommended that a student file a new FAFSA to correct the original SSN, but now that the Common Origination and Disbursement (COD) project will use the current SSN to process records, changing the original SSN is not always necessary (see Applicants Using Same SSN later in this chapter).

The COD project will replace the Direct Loan and Pell (RFMS) reporting systems, but there are other systems, such as EDE Express and possibly some mainframe and ~~safer~~ systems, that will still use the original SSN to identify records. These systems will be able to interface with COD, but the original SSN will be needed to process the records.

▼ *FAFSA data entry error.* If a student provided the correct SSN on the FAFSA, but the SSN on the output document is wrong, the student can contact the Federal Student Aid Information Center at 1-800-4-FED-AID (1-800-433-3243). If the Information Center confirms that there was a data entry error, it will refer the error to the Department for correction—the student does not need to submit a correction. After the data entry error is corrected, the CPS will produce new output documents. See Chapter 4 of the *Application and Verification Guide* for general information on data entry error corrections.

▼ *Error in Social Security database.* If the SSN on the FAFSA is correct but isn't in the Social Security database, the student must contact a local or regional Social Security Administration office to correct the database, which is updated daily with information from local and regional offices. The student must report the correct SSN and provide verifying documentation. He must also contact a Social Security office directly—the Department of Education cannot correct SSA records. Once the database is updated, the student can submit a correction by re-entering the SSN originally reported as if it is a correction. The CPS will then do another SSN match. The student can't simply verify that the SSN is correct; the application will be rejected until the SSA database is updated.

No match on name or birth date

The student's application won't be rejected if her SSN is in the Social Security database but the name differs from the one she gave. Misspellings or name changes due to marriage are common reasons for a nonmatch. The student should make sure that the name she puts on the application matches the name on her Social Security card.

You can disburse aid if the student can explain the discrepancy and provide documentation showing that the SSN belongs to her. Though she isn't required to contact the SSA to correct their database, and though she can receive aid without correcting the name reported on the FAFSA, we strongly recommend that the data be corrected. The incorrect name can prevent other matches such as the NSLDS match from working properly. Also, financial aid history data submitted to NSLDS using the incorrect name may cause problems for the student in later years.

As noted in the introduction, beginning with the 03-04 year if the student's name and SSN match the SSA database but the date of birth does not, the application will be rejected. If the date is correct, the student can override the reject by simply re-entering the date; the CPS will accept it. Again, if there is an error with the SSA database, the student should contact the SSA and have it corrected.

If the student reported the current or a later year as her birth date, her application will be rejected and she must correct the error.

Missing information

No match is performed if the student doesn't sign the FAFSA or provide a last name or birth date. The student's FAFSA will be rejected and the student must submit the missing information.

Although the CPS doesn't conduct the match, it will check to see whether the reported SSN falls within a range of valid numbers. If it does, the student will receive a comment explaining that the match could not be conducted without the name, birth date, or signature. The student must submit a correction providing the missing information. When the correction is sent, the information will be sent to the Social Security Administration for matching, and you should check the new output document for match results.

Example: Incorrect name on application

When Sarven Technical Institute receives Tod's ISIR, the SSN match shows the name on the application isn't the one associated with the SSN in the database. The FAA asks Tod to bring in documentation showing his correct name and SSN. He brings in his Social Security card, and the first name on the card is Warren, not Tod. He also has a driver's license showing his first name is Warren. The FAA could disburse aid to Tod, keeping a copy of the Social Security card as documentation of the correct name. However, because Tod has other corrections to make, the FAA asks him to also correct his name when he makes the other corrections.

Example: Correct name not in database

Elizabeth's ISIR shows that, according to the SSN match, her name doesn't match the one on file for her SSN. When the FAA talks to Elizabeth, she explains that she recently got married and changed her last name. Elizabeth gives the FAA a copy of her marriage certificate. The FAA plans to disburse aid to Elizabeth, but advises her to contact SSA and have the database updated to prevent future problems.

If the SSN is not within the valid range, the student will receive a comment and reject P stating that the reported SSN does not appear to be valid. In addition to submitting the missing name, birth date, or signature on a correction, the student must either contact the Social Security Administration to correct its records (if the reported SSN is correct) or correct the SSN she reported. Again, you should check the new output document for match results.

Date of death

If the Social Security Administration's database shows a date of death associated with the SSN the student reported, the student's application will be rejected. Students resolve this problem in the same way as problems matching the SSN. The student must either contact Social Security Administration to get the records corrected, or must submit a change with the correct SSN (see "No Match on SSN").

Prisoner match

As noted in the introduction, the Department no longer plans to conduct a match to determine which students are incarcerated.

APPLICANTS USING SAME SSN

When applicants with similar names report the same SSN by mistake, they may end up with a shared record identifier. The record identifier is made up of the SSN and the first two letters of the applicant's last name. The CPS uses this record identifier to identify the applicant for the rest of the award year, even if the student later makes a correction to the SSN or last name on the SAR or ISIR. If another student submits an application with the same SSN and first two letters of the last name, the CPS assumes the application is a duplicate application from the first applicant. As is usual with duplicate applications, the CPS won't accept the data on the new application (except for a new address or different schools). In addition, the shared number will cause problems for both students in the CPS and Pell systems, because the systems will treat them as a single student.

The student who has used the wrong SSN and now has a shared identifier **must** correct this error by filing a new AFSA. The student cannot simply submit a correction on the SAR or through EDE, because he or she will still have the same shared identifier.

If the student using the correct SSN applied after the other student, he must submit a special application called a "correction application." This correction application will cause the CPS to accept the student's data instead of treating the application as a duplicate and providing the other student's data on the output document. If the student using the correct SSN applied first, his or her data should already be on the application record, and so a correction application isn't necessary. However, the student should check if the address and schools have been changed and should correct those if necessary.

Example: Students using same SSN

Hector completes an application in January, but uses his brother Eddy's SSN instead of his own. When Hector gets his SAR, he realizes that he used the wrong SSN, corrects the SAR, and mails it back to the processor. He gets a new SAR with the correct SSN, but it has the same identifier as the first SAR. Eddy files an application in April, and is surprised to receive a SAR that doesn't match what was on his application because it has Hector's information instead. Eddy goes to the financial aid office at Guerrero University, where a counselor tells him he'll need to file a correction application. Hector is also attending Guerrero, so the counselor asks Eddy to have Hector contact the financial aid office so they can explain why he'll need to file a new application even though he already has a SAR with the correct information.

Social Security Number Match

Note: only students with a match flag of 4 (successful match) can get PINs

<i>Result</i>	<i>Match flag</i>	<i>"C" code or rejected application</i>	<i>Comment number and text</i>	<i>Action needed</i>
Successful match	4		No comment	No resolution required.
Match conducted. Date of birth inconsistent with SSA records	2	Reject R	060 The date of birth you reported on your application doesn't match the Social Security Administration's records. If the date of birth you reported is correct, contact the SSA. If it is incorrect, you should make corrections on this SAR.	Resolution required. If the date of birth is correct, the student must re-enter it on the SAR/ISIR to reaffirm it is correct. The CPS will then reprocess the transaction. Also, the student should contact the SSA to update its record so that this reject does not appear again. If the date is corrected, the record will be sent again for matching. Review subsequent transactions for the updated match flag.
Match conducted. Name inconsistent with SSA records	3	C code	061 The name you reported on your application doesn't match the Social Security Administration's records. If the name you reported is correct, contact SSA. If it is incorrect, you should make corrections on this SAR.	Resolution required. Student may provide document explaining discrepancy in name (e.g. marriage certificate). If the name is correct, the student can contact the SSA to correct its record. Once that's done, the student may re-enter the name and submit it. If the name is incorrect, the student can correct it on the SAR/ISIR, which will be sent for rematching. Review subsequent transactions for the updated match flag.
Match conducted. No match on SSN (SSN invalid)	1	Reject 18	024 The Social Security Administration (SSA) did not confirm that the social security number you reported on your aid application is valid. If you believe that the number you reported is correct, contact the SSA. If the social security number is incorrect, you should submit a new application with the correct social security number.	Resolution required. If the student's SSN is correct, the student must contact SSA. Once the SSA corrects its record, the student can reenter the SSN and submit it. If the SSN is incorrect, the student can correct it on the SAR/ISIR, which will show the SSN in field 8, but the student's original SAR ID will not change. Alternately, the student can file a new FAFSA, which will be treated as an original application and show that the SAR ID and the SSN are the same.

Social Security Number Match (continued)

<i>Result</i>	<i>Match flag</i>	<i>"C" code or rejected application</i>	<i>Comment number and text</i>	<i>Action needed</i>
No match conducted. Record could not be sent to SSA because no last name, date of birth, or signature provided.	8	Rejects N, 5, 13, 14, and/or 16	059 The Social Security Administration could not determine if the social security number you reported belongs to you because you did not give us your last name or date of birth. Review these items and make the necessary corrections.	Resolution required. The student must provide the name, date of birth, and/or signature. When the corrections are submitted, the application will be rematched with SSA. Review subsequent transactions for updated match flag.
No match conducted. Record could not be sent to SSA because no last name, date of birth, or signature provided.	8	Rejects N, 5, 13, 14, 16 and/or P	023 It appears that the social security number you reported on your application is not valid. Review the number you reported in item 8 and make the necessary corrections.	Resolution required. The student must provide the name, date of birth, and/or signature. The student should resolve the SSN problem according to the note under action needed for comment 24.
No additional match conducted. Applicant tried to change SSN after SSA verified that reported SSN was correct.	4		013 You cannot change your social security number, because the Social Security Administration already verified that this social security number belongs to you.	If the student used the wrong SSN, yet his name, date of birth, and SSN were confirmed by SSA on the previous transaction, this must be resolved. Contact ED's Correction Application Coordinator at 785-838-2141 for further instructions.
Match conducted. Successful match to a deceased person's record on the SSA database.	5	Reject 8	145 According to Social Security Administration (SSA) records, the social security number you provided in Item 8 belongs to a deceased person. If the SSN in Item 8 is correct, you must contact an SSA office to resolve this problem.	Resolution required. The student should resolve this problem according to the note under action needed for comment 24.

Both students should keep copies of all the output documents, including those from the first FAFSAs filed. When the students file the correction application or a new FAFSA, the application receipt date is changed. Because some schools and agencies use this receipt date to determine if the student met a deadline, the students should keep the output documents to show the original receipt date and to show why a second (and later) application was necessary.

If you believe that a correction application may be needed, contact the Department at 1-855-838-2141 for more information. If it is needed, it can be mailed either to your office or to the student.

EXCEPTION FOR MICRONESIA, MARSHALL ISLANDS, AND PALAU

Students from the Republic of the Marshall Islands, the Federated States of Micronesia, and the Republic of Palau are not required to provide SSNs. Students from these areas who do not have SSNs should now send their FAFSAs to the same address that other students do.

The CPS will assign an identification number for students who indicate on their 03-04 FAFSA that their state of legal residence is one of the Pacific islands and who do not provide a Social Security number. As in previous years, these applications are exempt from the SSN match with the SSA.

**SSN exception for residents of
the Freely Associated States**
HEA Sec. 484(a)(4)

Pacific island students without SSNs can use *FAFSA on the Web* to apply electronically—there is an edit that allows these students to enter an SSN beginning with 888. As an alternative, you can use EDExpress to transmit the FAFSA data for these students.

